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USIBWC COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCES RESOLUTION OF MEXICO'S RIO GRANDE WATER DEBT

Commissioner Arturo Q. Duran of the United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) welcomed the announcement made by Secretary of State Rice in Mexico City today that the United States and Mexico have reached an understanding that will effectively eliminate Mexico's Rio Grande water debt by the end of this water year (September 30, 2005). Resolution of the water debt has been a top priority for President George W. Bush due to the impacts on the Lower Rio Grande communities in Texas and the ramifications for compliance with the 1944 Water Treaty.

"I am pleased that our diplomatic dialogue with Mexico produced a great benefit for both countries, illustrating a spirit of cooperation that sets the stage for resolving important issues border wide. I want to thank President George W. Bush and the State of Texas for their leadership, commitment, and support in bringing this issue to closure," said Commissioner Duran.

The understanding, based on the recommendation of Duran and his counterpart, Commissioner Arturo Herrera Solís of the Mexican Section of the Commission, provides for water transfers as well as additional deliveries in order to pay off the entire debt. As of October 1, 2004, Mexico's deficit stood at 716,670 acre-feet.

Based on implementation of the understandings reached, the United States and Mexico will consider that Mexico's water debt is completely eliminated. Under the 1944 Water Treaty, Mexico is to deliver to the United States an annual average of 350,000 acre-feet in the Rio

Grande basin in cycles of five years. Since 1992, Mexico has accumulated a water deficit, which reached a high of more than 1.5 million acre-feet in 2002.

In addition to the deliveries to pay off the water debt, Mexico will continue to deliver sufficient water to meet its obligations for the current water cycle. Mexico has already delivered the minimum annual requirement of 350,000 acre-feet during the first two full years of the current cycle.

To provide for improved planning for Mexico's treaty compliance, the International Boundary and Water Commission intends to consult annually to review basin conditions and develop water delivery plans for the cycle year. The Commission also plans to continue to work cooperatively on drought management strategies for the Rio Grande basin.

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